DETAILED ACTION

Claims 1-13 are examined.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

Claim 1-13 rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Ikeda et al.

(5937391)

As per claim 1

Ikeda et al. discloses:

A point management method that manages points that are given to a user, comprising:

(Col 2, lines 23-27)

- a step of confirming an expiration date of points of a giving source user, after accepting a request for giving points from the giving source user of points, by referring to a user database that stores information of the number of points that the user has and the expiration date, according to each member; (Fig. 8; Col 8, lines 29-36)
- a step of accepting designation of a giving number of points and a giving destination user from the giving source user, in a case where the expiration date of points of the giving source user has not passed; and;(Fig. 14, Fig. 1, Col 3, lines 52-58)
- a step of subtracting the designated giving number of points from the number of points of the giving source user that is stored in said user database, and

adding the giving number of points to the number of points of the giving destination user that is stored in said user database. (Fig. 8, Fig. 19, Col 2, lines 39-42)

As per claim 2

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The point management method according to claim 1, further comprising:

- a step of extracting information of a user that belongs to the same group as the group that the giving source user belongs, from a belonging database that stores information, correlating a user and a group to which the user belongs; (Fig.14: it is determined whether customer belongs to point shop group or not.)
- a step of providing the extracted information of users to the user terminal of the giving source user, as information of candidates of being the giving destination user; and (Col 4, lines 18-26: For a subscriber to get a member charge or commission, candidate information must be given to the giving user; Col 4, lines 55-60.)
- a step of accepting a user, selected by the giving source user, from the candidates of the giving destination user, as the giving destination user. (Col 4, lines 26-33)

As per claim 3

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The point management method according to claim 1, further comprising a step of extracting information of the group to which the giving destination user belongs and the group to which the giving source user belongs, from the belonging database that stores information, correlating a user and a group to which the user belongs, and making giving of point possible to the giving destination user, in a case where the group to which the giving destination user belongs and the group to which the giving source user belongs match. (Col 6, lines 6-17.)

As per claim 4

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The point management method according to claim 1, further comprising:

- a step of determining whether the expiration date of points of the giving destination user has passed, by referring to said user database; and (Col 5, lines 35-38.)
- a step of making giving of points possible to the giving destination user from the giving source user, in a case where the expiration date of the giving destination user has not passed. (Fig. 14, Fig. 15)

As per claim 5

Ikeda et al. discloses:

A management computer that is connected to a user database that stores information of the number of points that a user has and expiration date of the points that the user has, correlating it with identification information of the user, comprising: (Fig. 4)

- a request receiving unit which receives a request for giving of points, including identification information of the giving source user, from a terminal, via a network; (Fig. 4, Points issuing process performance unit(22))
- an expiration date confirming unit which searches the user database based on the identification information of the giving source user, and confirms that the expiration date of points of the giving source member that is stored in the user database, has not passed; (Fig. 4, Patrol Process Performing Unit (24), Points Management Process (21); Fig.7, S4,S6; Fig 10, S11, S15.)
- a giving content receiving unit which receives information that specifies the giving number of points and giving destination user, from said terminal, via said network, in a case where it is confirmed that the expiration date of points of the giving source user has not passed; and (Fig. 4, Patrol Process Performing Unit (24), Points Management Process (21); Fig.7, S4,S6; Fig 10, S11, S15.)
- a point number updating unit which subtracts the giving number of points from the number of points of the giving source user that is stored in said user database, and adds the giving number of points to the number of points of the giving destination user that is stored in said user database. (Fig. 4, Points Redeeming Process Performing Unit (23), Points Management Process (21);

Fig. 14, Fig.15.)

As per claim 6

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The management computer according to claim 5, wherein,

said management computer is further connected to a belonging database that stores identification information of each user and group identification information of the group to which the user belongs, and the user information of each user is further stored in said user database, and said giving content receiving unit:

- extracts identification information of users correlated with the same group identification information as the group identification information of the group, which the giving source user belongs to, from said belonging database, and extracts user information that corresponds to the identification information of the extracted users, from said user database; (Col 2, lines 28-37; Fig. 14, Fig. 18)
- sends the extracted user information as information of candidates of the giving destination user, to the terminal of the giving source user; and (Fig. 10, Col 8, lines 37-47)
- receives from said terminal, information indicating the giving destination user, which is designated from the candidates of the giving destination user, by the giving source user. (Fig. 7, Col 6, line 9-17.)

As per claim 7

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The management computer according to claim 5, wherein said management computer is further connected to a belonging database that stores identification information of users and group identification information of the group to which said user belongs, correlated with each other, and said point number updating unit:

- extracts group identification information of the group to which the giving destination user belongs and group identification information of the group to which the giving source user belongs, from said belonging database; (Col 2, lines 28-37; Fig.7, S4: Fig. 14, S20, S21, S34; Fig. 18)
- determines whether the extracted group identification information matches or not; and (Fig. 7, S4; Fig.14, S20, S21; Fig. 15, S40)
- makes giving of points to the giving destination user possible, in a case where the extracted group identification information matches. (Col 11, lines 64-67, Col 12, line 1-20)

As per claim 8

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The management computer according to claim 5, wherein said point number updating unit determines whether the expiration date of points of the giving destination user has passed or not, by referring to said user database, and makes giving of points from the giving source user to the giving destination user possible, in a case where the expiration

date of points of the giving destination user has not passed. (Col 6, lines 33-38.)

As per claim 9

Ikeda et al. discloses:

A computer readable recording medium that stores a program for controlling a computer to execute:

- a step of receiving a request of point giving, including identification information of the giving source user, from a terminal, via a network; (Fig. 3, Fig.4 (22), Col. 5, lines 40-46; Col. 10, lines 5-10.)
- a step of searching a user database that stores the number of points that a user has and the expiration date, based on the identification information of the giving source user, and confirms that the expiration date of points of the giving source user, which is stored in the user database, has not passed; (Fig. 3, Fig.7, S6)
- a step of obtaining information that specifies the giving number of points and the giving destination user, from said terminal, via said network, in a case where it is confirmed that the expiration date of points of the giving source user has not passed; and(Fig. 3, Fig. 10, S11)
- a step of subtracting the giving number of points from the number of points of the giving source user, stored in the user database, and adding the giving number of points to the number of points of the giving destination user, stored in the user database. (Fig. 3; Fig. 14, S24,S25.)

As per claim 10

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The computer readable recording medium according to claim 9, that stores said program for further controlling a computer to execute:

- a step of extracting the identification information of the users correlated with the same group identification information as the group identification information of the group, which the giving source user belongs to, from the belonging database that stores the identification information of the users and the identification information of the group to which the user belongs correlated with each other; (Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 7, S2,S3,S4; Fig. 14, S20,S21, Fig.17, S47, Fig. 19)
- a step of extracting the user information that corresponds to the extracted identification information of the user, from the user database that further stores user information of each user; (Fig. 3, Fig. 4, Fig. 7, S2,S3,S4; Fig. 14, S20,S21, Fig.17, S47,.)
- a step of sending the extracted user information to the terminal of the giving source user, as information of candidates of the giving destination user; and (Fig. 2, 5 (Sales Notification); Col4, lines 55-60; Fig. 18, Col12, lines 53-60)
- a step of receiving from said terminal, information indicating the giving destination user, selected from the candidates of the giving destination user. (Fig. 14, S20, S21; Fig. 19)

As per claim 11

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The computer readable recording medium according to 20 claim 9, that stores said program for further controlling a computer to execute a step of:

- extracting group identification information of the group to which the giving destination user belongs and the group identification information of the group to which the giving source user belongs, from the belonging database that stores, correlating with each other, identification information of the user and group identification information of the group to which the user belongs; (Fig. 13, Fig. 14, S24, S25, S31)
- determining whether the extracted group identification information matches; and (Fig. 14, S20,S21; Fig. 16)
- making possible the giving of points to the giving destination user, in a case where the extracted group identification information matches. (Fig. 14, S30, S32, S33)

As per claim 12

Ikeda et al. discloses:

The computer readable recording medium according to claim 9, that stores said program for further controlling a computer to execute:

- a step of determining whether the expiration date of the points of the giving destination user has passed or not, by referring to the user database; and (Fig. 1,

Fig. 3, Fig.4, Fig. 7, S6, Fig. 8, the management terms shows the expiration date of points.)

- a step of making possible the giving of points to the giving destination user from the giving source user, in a case where the expiration date of points of the giving destination user has not passed. (Fig.7, S6, Fig. 8, Fig. 10, S11; Fig. 14, S21)

As per claim 13

Ikeda et al. discloses:

A computer data signal, embedded in a carrier wave, and representing a program for controlling a computer, which is connected to a user database that stores correlating, the number of points that a user has and information of expiration date with the identification information of the user, to execute:

- a step of receiving a request for giving points, including identification information of the giving source user, from a terminal via a network;(Fig.1-3)
- a step of searching the user database, based on the identification information of the giving source user, and confirming that the expiration date of the points of the giving source user, stored in the user database has not passed;(Fig.3, Fig. 7, S6; Fig.10, S11)
- a step of obtaining information that specifies the giving number of points and the giving destination user from said terminal via said network, in a case where it is confirmed that the expiration date of the points of the giving source user has not passed; and (Fig.5, Fig. 7, S6; Fig. 10, S11)

- a step of subtracting the giving number of points from the number of points of the giving source user, stored in the user database, and adding the giving number of points to the number of points of the giving destination user, stored in the user database. (Fig. 14)

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Colleen Hoar whose telephone number is 571-270-3447. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday- Thursday 7:30-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Tom Dixon can be reached on 571-272-6803. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

Colleen Hoar
Examiner
Art Unit 4172

/C. H./

/Thomas A Dixon/

Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 4172